
House Public Education Committee

Testimony on SB 1455



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Introduction

Frisco ISD's mission is to know every student by name and need. However, current law regarding online learning has prevent the district from serving all of its students. The district has a number of homebound students, students with medical conditions requiring long-term treatment, students in outpatient treatment facilities, adult students, and elite athletes, all of whom Frisco ISD cannot currently serve because of limitations on online learning in current law.

Homebound Students

Currently, although there are provisions made for homebound students, the district is unable to provide complete support for these students. One student, who is homebound due to a medical condition that causes him to be extremely susceptible to infection, has frequently asked for more content and interaction with his homebound instructor and other students. Frisco ISD is currently unable to provide that interaction or additional content. However, if Frisco ISD were able to establish a virtual school, this student would be able to be part of an online learning community where he interacts with his teachers and other students, while still protecting his health by staying home.

Long-Term Medical Care

Frisco ISD also has students who are receiving long-term medical care at facilities outside of the district. One student is receiving 6 weeks of chemotherapy at Cook Children's Medical Center in Dallas. Because she is out of school for 6 weeks, current law would require her to either enroll in Dallas ISD or in an online school and as Frisco ISD cannot currently operate an online school, the district has been unable to serve this student. As a result, she is receiving instruction from a different school on a different scope and sequence than the classroom to which she hopes to return. Allowing school districts to establish new virtual schools and electronic courses would allow Frisco ISD to continue serving this student and keep her on the same scope and sequence to help her transition back into the classroom more seamless.

Outpatient Treatment

Similar to students needing long-term medical care, a number of FISD students must seek outpatient treatment for a period of time. The district currently has around 40 students in outpatient treatment facilities. Unfortunately, FISD is unable to serve these students because we cannot offer online courses to them. These students do not qualify for homebound services and cannot be placed on an optional flexible school day program. One of these students spent six weeks in an outpatient facility then transitioned back into the classroom, but only part-time. As a result, she missed so much content that it became very overwhelming for her to catch up. When she needed an additional period of treatment, she ended up unenrolling in the district because of the lack of resources needed to provide her with continued instruction. This student could have continued to be included in the FISD community via online learning during her treatment, but was instead left behind because the district was not allowed by law to offer online instruction.

Adult Students

Frisco ISD also has students who dropout of school due to family or medical issues. Often these students return seeking options for completing their degree. However, the students have jobs or children and are unable to return to campus to complete classes. In addition, students who are older than current high school students often feel that they no longer belong in the classroom with current students. Online courses would allow us to offer the flexibility and personalization these students need to complete their degrees.

Elite Athletes

Frisco ISD has a number of students who are engaged in elite athletic programs that require near constant travel. Many times these students can only compete at the highest level if they have the flexibility to travel around the country. Currently, these students may opt out of difficult classes because they spend so much time travelling to and from school, practice and competitions. One such student chose not to take AP courses because he had to drive over an hour for practice. However, other students on his team were able to take flexible online classes that worked for their schedules. The financial cost of an elite athlete chasing his or her dreams is often very high for parents and many times parents cannot afford a private tutor to keep the student caught up. Online courses allow Frisco ISD to serve these students so that they do not have to sacrifice their education to pursue their passion.

Conclusion

Frisco ISD has hundreds of students like those mentioned above who often end up missing out on the education they deserve because of medical or family issues, personal struggles, or their passion for a

sport or other activity. Through online courses and a full-time virtual school, Frisco ISD hopes to be able to serve these students and fulfill its mission to know every student by name and need